UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8, MONTANA OFFICE
FEDERAL BUILDING, 10 West 15th St, Suite 3200
HELENA, MONTANA 59626

Ref: 8MO

July 25, 2012

Ms. Mary C. Erickson, Forest Supervisor
Gallatin and Custer National Forests
1310 Main Street
Billings, MT 59105

and

Mr. Richard Opper, Director
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Re: CEQ # 20120200; EPA Comments on Stillwater Mining Company's Revised Water Management Plans and Boe Ranch LAD Project FEIS

Dear Ms. Erickson and Mr. Opper:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region VIII Montana Office has reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Custer and Gallatin National Forest's and Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality's (MDEQ's) Stillwater Mining Company's Revised Water Management Plans and Boe Ranch LAD Project in accordance with EPA responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

The EPA appreciates receipt of responses to agency and public DEIS comments included in Chapter 5 of the FEIS. We are pleased that the technical memo in Appendix E states that current and historical geochemical data for waste rock, tailings, and ore at both the Stillwater and East Boulder mines indicate a very low potential for acid generation, and metals contamination of ground water is not expected from discharge of Stillwater Mine adit, tailings waters or Hertzler Ranch LAD and East Boulder Mine adit or tailings waters. The lead agencies believe static and kinetic testing and metals leachability testing is unwarranted during post-closure, and do not anticipate the need for analyses or treatment of constituents other than nitrogen. We acknowledge this perspective, although we suggest that some periodic checks for the presence of elevated metals levels in mine discharges may be a good precaution to verify that metals contamination of ground water or receiving waters does not occur at some point in the future.

The FEIS clarifies that at closure, Stillwater Mine adit water inflows would flood the mine and water would only discharge to the Stillwater River after mine closure (approximately 4 to 11 years after mine

closure). At the East Boulder Mine adit water post-closure would be directly discharged to the East Boulder River. Technical memos in Appendix E indicate that the lead agencies have constructed a mathematical model to estimate nitrogen concentrations in adit water at closure and post-closure, and MPDES permit limits for nitrogen in discharges to the Stillwater River (from the flooding of Stillwater Mine) would be met, and no treatment of Stillwater Mine shaft water would be necessary post-closure. The FEIS also reports that discharges to the East Boulder River at the East Boulder Mine would meet MPDES permit limits, and that in-stream concentrations of total inorganic nitrogen in the Stillwater and East Boulder Rivers have not exceeded 0.3 mg/L downstream of the mines.

We are pleased that MPDES permit limits would be met for discharges to receiving waters at both mines and would be adjusted if necessary to assure compliance with Water Quality Standards in receiving waters, and that water quality monitoring will be required during mine closure. We note that it is important that adequate water quality monitoring be carried out post-closure as well to validate EIS water quality analysis predictions and verify continued compliance with Water Quality Standards.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the NEPA process and review the Stillwater Mining Company's Revised Water Management Plans and Boe Ranch LAD EIS. If you have any questions regarding our input please contact Mr. Stephen Potts of my staff in Missoula at 406-329-3313 or in Helena at (406) 457-5022. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Julie A. DalSoglio
Director
Montana Office

cc: Suzanne Bohan/Judy Roos, EPA, 8EPR-N, Denver
Dean Yashan, MDEQ, Helena